

(A)
DISCOURSE

UPON THE
NATURE AND NECESSITY

2

OF
CHRISTIAN COMMUNION,

IN ORDER TO
EVERLASTING HAPPINESS.

By JOSEPH NEIL

Minister of the gospel at ANDERSTOUN.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

1 John iii. 14.

---He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen.

1 John iv. 20.

And they (i. e. the primitive Christians) continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine, and in communion, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts ii. 42.

And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: but the greatest of these is love.

1 Cor. xiii. 13.

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THE

P R E F A C E.

IN the following discourse, I have had no particular persons, nor party names in view, only the temper and behaviour of the generality of professing Christians, among whom there appears, in this age, a strong propensity to trample upon the sacred laws of love and communion, as if they were but matters of indifference. Many will neither bear a minister, nor maintain fellowship, in gospel ordinances, with their fellow Christians, unless they be of the very same sentiments with themselves, even in sentiments that have no connection with truth and duty: nay, I wish there was no reason to say, unless they be of the same sentiments that stand opposed both to truth and duty. This dreadful turn of mind is too glaring an evidence, if we believe the sacred scriptures, that however much religion such people may have in their mouths, they are strangers to the power of it in their hearts. My reasons for publishing this discourse are, as my apprehensions of the terms of Christian communion, are more large, than, I am sorry to say, the notions many entertain of them are (who have great pretensions to a just veneration for Christ's authority) and therefore have been called by some, a Latitudinarian, which, according to the idea some people affix to that word, is the same thing, in my opinion, with being a moderate Deist. Some Christian friends, for whose judgment and unaffected piety I have a very high esteem, importuned me repeatedly, to publish a short and plain discourse upon this subject. The arguments some of them used, for this purpose, were, the vindication of my own character called for it, and it might be a mean of making some serious people

ple see, that, that temper and behaviour, included in Christian communion, is of greater importance, in the sight of God, than many are willing to believe. I have complied with their desire; and whither my views of the communion of saints be larger or, more contracted than the scriptures of truth authorize, the impartial public will be able to determine. Upon comparing the following discourse with these sacred records, which are the only rule of faith and manners, in all matters of religion, and are to be the rule of our final judgment at the last day. I never saw any thing written on the subject, tho' I have no reason to think there is not, and to far better purpose than this, especially as there are so many valuable books published on the several branches of our holy religion, this methinks could not be omitted, which is so essentially necessary to constitute the Christian character, and without it (I mean that temper and behaviour included in Christian communion) there can be no religion; for without love to God, and to all who bear his amiable image, which is the ordinary reason or cause of the breach of Christian communion, all outward forms and pretences, are but so many pieces of solemn hypocrisy. I have only consulted the word of God, and if that had been always kept in view, and mens hearts influenced and directed by that great law of love, the different party names that have obtained in the Christian world, at least many of them, would never have been heard of. Some people, whose views of Christian communion are more confined, or more enlarged than mine, may be offended with what I have advanced in the following pages: I shall only say, that it is contrary both to my temper and principles, to offend any willingly, and if I have deviated from the great rule of righteousness into any of these extremes, I will take it kind in any person to point it out to me, in private conversation, or by letters, whether minister or private Christian, of whatever denomination: such, I assure them, I will esteem my friends, and promise them my unfeigned thanks. The discourse is only a few haf-

ty thoughts thrown together when I could obtain a leisure hour, without the studied ornaments of style, or accuracy of sentiment. The subject appears to me from scripture to be of everlasting importance, and therefore have endeavoured to be understood by the meanest capacity; and for the same reason, have, in sense, made some repetitions, in order to keep the subject always in view. Though this may offend some of a delicate taste, yet every body knows the necessity of it, who has been much conversant with many people, who have not had the advantage of a liberal education, and for such this discourse is chiefly designed. And if it be a mean to check that anti-christian spirit in any, which prevails so much among us, and excite any to aspire after a spirit of peace, love, and a sound mind, I shall rejoice.

I John

I JOHN i. 7.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

THE most high God is emphatically styled Love, by the Spirit of inspiration, and justly may our holy religion, which he hath published to the world, be called a religion which consists in love. Not only upon the account of his amazing love to us, revealed in the gospel, but because all the duties he requires of us in reference to himself, and to one another are summed up in this excellent principle. And though a supreme affection to our great Creator, be the first and great commandment, yet as our Lord declares, the command that enjoins love to our fellow-men, is like it, that is, as indispensibly necessary in order to our endless felicity as the other, nay we are told without a sincere love to our Christian brethren, we have no genuine love to God himself: We ought therefore, frequently to be trying the truth and sincerity of our religion by this test, whither or not, our love be unfeigned, and extended to all whom we are bound in the judgment of rational charity to think are the children of God. It is too evident that whatever love many in these days pretend to have to the followers of the blessed Jesus, it is not extended to all whom they have reason to believe bear his amiable image; but confined to such who are of their own party name, and espouse all their favourite tenets, this is only loving themselves.

f. or at least their own image in another. But unless we feel ourselves sweetly constrained to love all who hold to the essential articles of faith, and appear to love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, whatever party name they sustain, or though they differ from us in lesser matters. Unless, I say we love, or have a delightful complacency in all such, so as to maintain Christian communion with them, whatever pretences we may have to religion, or the rules of morality, they are vain, we are yet in our sins far from the kingdom of God, and have no interest in the Saviour's propitiatory death and sacrifice, this is plainly intimated in my text. *If we walk in the light, &c.*

In which words you may observe, that mutual love, and communion or fellowship, are mentioned as evidences of our being in a state of real holiness, and cleansed from the guilt of sin, by virtue of our Lord's expiatory sufferings and death, and if we be strangers to such a temper and behaviour (*viz.* implied in communion or fellowship) we are under the guilt and dominion of sin, The word translated, fellowship, is used variously both in scripture and other authors. In order to your better understanding the meaning of it give me leave to instance in these following particulars, how it is used.

FIRST, It is used to express that common interest all men have in one another as they are partakers of, or have fellowship in the same nature. Hence the Apostle, Heb. ii. 4 Speaking of believers, tells us, that those children were partakers, or had communion, or fellowship in flesh and blood (*viz.* with the rest of the world of mankind) and therefore the Son of God himself came into the same communion or fellowship.

SECONDLY, The word is used to signify an interest or joint participation in the same actions, while

ther good or bad. Thus the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees, though they were animated by the same hellish spirit of persecution with their fathers, yet said, to our blessed Saviour, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets, Matth. xxiii. 30. The word here translated partakers, and the forecited text, is the same which in other places of sacred writ, is rendered, communion and fellowship and the meaning of the Scribes and Pharisees was, that if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would have had no communion and fellowship with them in that awful guilt of murdering God's holy prophets. It is of the same import with the Hebrew word, which in our translation is sometimes rendered partakers, companions, and by a figure such are styled, brethren. In this sense Simeon and Levi are called brethren and instruments of cruelty, by their good old father when dying, because they were companions, or had communion in that cruel act of revenge, or murder of the Shechemites, Gen. xxxiv. It signifies also, communion or fellowship in acts of beneficence. But to do good and communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased, Heb. xiii. 16. And the same Apostle, Rom. xv. 26. commends the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, for making a certain contribution (in the original, it is communion) for the poor saints which were at Jerusalem.

THIRDLY, It is used to express a communion in state and condition, whither good or evil, and that in reference to things internal and external, 2 Peter 1. 4 'That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature;' *i. e.* that ye might have communion in the image of the blessed God, which is stamped upon all real Christians by his regenerating grace. And Chap. iv. 13. 'Rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings.' He meant these sufferings which attended the primitive Christians,

Christians, for Christ's sake, from persecuting Jews and Heathens. And tho' I have just now hinted, it may be necessary to observe to you again, that the words rendered partakers in both these passages are from the same verb: which in other places of sacred writ, is translated, communicate, partake, communion, fellowship, &c. From these and other instances that might be given of the application of this word, rendered communion, and some times fellowship as in the text, &c. It implies a joint participation in any thing whatever good or evil, duty or enjoyment, nature or actions; and therefore what is called the communion of saints (styled in my text, fellowship one with another, and by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, Phil. i. 5. fellowship in the gospel) implies that mutual love and harmony, that should reign in their hearts and lives, and joining with one heart in all the ordinances of the gospel. The devout King of Israel gives the meaning of it, in reference to his own temper and behaviour to other good men, Psal. cxix. 63. 'I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.' Having shown the meaning of the word (which I thought very necessary, because in conversing with several serious Christians, I have found some whose apprehensions of it were very dark, others their notions of it dangerously confin'd) We shall,

FIRST, Show what Christian fellowship, or communion includes in it.

SECONDLY, The necessity of such a temper and behaviour, in order to our everlasting felicity.----- And then conclude with improving the subject, in order to a suitable temper and practice.

As to the first of these, Christian communion or fellowship, includes in it, these following things,

First

First, A high esteem and affection for all, who in the judgment of charity, we are obliged to think are the adopted children of the blessed God, by their faith and practice. — Our beneficent affection and esteem, is not to be confin'd to them indeed, but extended to all men whatever character or name they bear. No difference in religion, much less doubtful opinions can excuse us from exercising acts of mercy, and compassion towards such as are really in want and need our assistance. Our holy religion makes all persons the object of our compassion and charity who are indigent and helpless, tho' they be strangers and foreigners, heathens or heretics, friends or foes, whither they be good or bad, holy or wicked, as we have opportunity, we must do good unto all, and imitate the example of our merciful God, who is kind to the unthankful, and to the evil. This temper and behaviour is inculcated upon us almost every where in the sacred oracles, and set before us in the most amiable light, as well as recommended by our blessed Saviour in that excellent parable (or history as some have supposed) Luke ix. 30,----38. But besides this love which is due from us to all men, there is a peculiar esteem or delightful complacency that all true believers have, or at least ought to have in one another as such. The most high God by several phrases expresses how valuable they are in his sight, he styles them, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, and peculiar people; he calls them his children, his jewels, his peculiar treasure and heritage. And if they be so precious in God's sight, much more ought they to be honourable in ours, we should esteem them the excellent ones of the earth, and delight in them for his sake. And doubtless all who are in-
 flamed with a sacred affection to God, and to all men in proportion to the degrees they bear of his image: A sincere disciple of Jesus, though clothed with
 age, is more glorious in their view of things, than
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the most prosperous sinner clothed in purple and scarlet. They have a higher veneration for such, whose souls the blessed God has adorned with the graces of his holy Spirit, than for any wicked sensualist, though swimming in wealth, and glittering with all the marks of secular glory.

Secondly, Christian fellowship or communion, includes in it an affectionate unanimity in the profession of the same faith, and obedience to our God and Saviour. Both these, I mean, love and union of sentiment (as to the leading articles of faith and practice, are essentially necessary to constitute this sacred friendship, that should subsist, (and does in some measure) among all the genuine disciples of the blessed Jesus, and if any of these be wanting, tho' professors may externally agree amongst themselves, it cannot be called the communion of saints. We are told (Acts iv. 32. that the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and one soul.) The great Apostle of the Gentiles, tells us, that James, Peter, and John, knowing the grace given to him, gave to him and Barnabas, the right-hand of fellowship (Greek, communion) *viz.* as a sign of their being one mind, in reference to the doctrines and duties of the gospel. Love is styled the bond of perfectness, Col. iii. 14. because it ties or unites all the children of God into one blessed and holy society, and is included in what is elsewhere called the unity of the Spirit, which all who profess Christianity are exhorted in the warmest manner, and by the strongest motives to cultivate and preserve, Eph. iv. 3. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the original word imports a diligent endeavour, or intense desire of soul, to support and maintain that unity of the Spirit, *viz.* a unity of love or affection to one another, a unity of judgment, in respect of faith, or these important articles of faith in our holy religion; seven of which

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the Apostle sums up in the three subsequent verses, as arguments to inforce his exhortation, to this unity of the Spirit, one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord Jesus, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.

The faith of all real Christians, is styled in scripture, a common faith, and their salvation, a common salvation. The communion of saints which we profess to believe in our creed, and is so much inculcated upon us in the sacred oracles, consists chiefly in a communion of faith, charity or love. And this kind of communion, all the different members and parties of the Catholic church; I mean the true church of Christ, have one with another, however they agree or disagree in lesser matters. They are all animated and sanctified by the same spirit, live by the same faith, wait for the hope of the same glory and endless felicity, and walk in the same course of holy obedience, as the appointed mean in order to that end. This will be the temper and behaviour of all, who are influenced by the Spirit of the meek, the holy, and loving Saviour, and without such a temper and behaviour, we have no interest in his propitiatory death and sacrifice; we have nothing of the Christian but the name. Whatever pretensions we may have to orthodox sentiments, and zeal for particular tenets, if love be wanting, these are nothing in the sight of God; and our true character is, having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it.

Thirdly, Christian fellowship or communion, includes in it: Joining together in the same solemnities of public worship, instituted by our God and Saviour. I would not be understood here, as if I meant, that we are bound to join in all the ordinances of the gospel, with such who in the judgment of charity, we are obliged to think are saints; if they have adopted into their system of religion,

any thing that is apparently contrary to the laws or institutions of the Lord Jesus, the only Head of his church, or who are guilty either of adding to, or diminishing from his ordinances. To join with any in these things, would undoubtedly be our sin, and not our duty. I know no sin we are so much cautioned against in scripture, as human inventions in the worship of God, which he has stigmatized with names of contempt, expressive of his just resentment against them. He styles them will-worship, the commandments of men, as opposed to his; our Lord charges men with the guilt of making void the commands of God by them, or invading his sovereign authority. And therefore, we are forbid to give heed to the commandments of men, Titus i. 14. And the Lord Jesus pronounces a curse upon all who shall be guilty either of adding to, or taking from his word or institutions, Revel. xxii. 18, 19. Deut. iv. 2. Prov. xxx. 6. Col. ii. 21, 22. And, in a word, we are forbidden to taste, touch, or handle the ordinances of men. That is, we are to keep at the greatest distance from every thing in matters of religion, that is stamped with no higher authority, than that of men.

To join, I say, with the greatest saints on earth in any thing, in divine worship which appears plainly to us; either not to be agreeable, or contrary to the institutions of the Son of God, whatever pretensions the authors of such rites might have to zeal, decency, or order, in worship would be to involve ourselves in the guilt of what the spirit of inspiration styles, communion with others in their sins, and expressly forbids. 'Be not partakers, or do not communicate with others in their sins,' 1 Tim. v. 22. Nay it would be a daring violation of the laws of conscience, and thereby flying in the face of God's authority, whose deputy that power of the soul is. Hence we are told, Rom. xiv. 1. 'He that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of
 'faith'

'faith: for whatsoever is not faith is sin.' Now if a man incurs guilt, by doing any thing, which he is not satisfied of its lawfulness; much more when he acts contrary to the express command of God, and the dictates of his own conscience. But though it would be our sin to join with good men in the solemnities of religious worship; or communicate with them in any thing we apprehend not agreeable to the law of Christ: Yet should any such desire to join with us, in that mode of worship we use (such I mean who zealously adhere to the essential doctrines of the gospel, and in the prevailing tenor of their lives, appear to love the Lord Jesus in sincerity) though through the prejudice of education, or want of opportunity and means of knowing better err in some things which comparatively, may be called, lesser matters.

To refuse such occasional communion with us, after our expressing to them our disapprobation of those things we think wrong, would be assuming to ourselves a power, for which we have no authority from the Lord Jesus *; nay, it would be contrary to

* In order that my meaning here may be fully understood, I shall instance the church of England, the hierarchy and antisciptural rites of which, few have a worse opinion than I. One of her own members says, We have the doctrine of Christ, meaning the articles, but the government of Antichrist. The truth of this assertion has been fully proved by many able pens, and is obvious to all who believe the sacred scriptures are sufficient, and the only rule of faith and worship. But in that church there have been, and still are, ministers, as well as private Christians, eminently pious, found in the great doctrines of the gospel, zealous for their God and Saviour's interests, and in promoting the salvation of lost sinners. They would be willing to have these human inventions, in her worship and government abolished, if it was in their power, but cannot see them so criminal, as to be sufficient reasons for breaking communion with her, especially as some of them add, they could not be so extensively

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to the whole strain of an inspired apostle's reasoning and exhortation, Rom. xiv. 'Him that is weak in the faith receive you, &c.' in order to understand his meaning, it is necessary to observe, that some of the believing Jews at Rome apprehended, that the observation of the ceremonial law, in reference to meats and days, was still obligatory. A great defect or weakness in faith indeed, we may well think, especially as we are told by the same apostle, and have reason to believe they had heard, that he himself was persuaded, by the faith of the Lord Jesus, that there was nothing now unclean of itself, but every creature of God, or kind of food, is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, 1 Tim. iv. 4. That the Jewish feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths, were only shadows

useful in their ministry. I do not pretend to vindicate these arguments, for I am far from thinking them good. But if such ministers were providentially in this country for a while, and express their earnest desire to preach, or join with us in the sacrament of our Lord's supper, in the manner that we celebrate that sacred solemnity in this church, have we a warrant from the word of God to refuse, at least, such occasional communion with them, because they have not the very same views of these ceremonies as we have? or suppose men of another denomination, such as the great Dr. Owen, Goodwin, &c. in the last century, and the late Dr. Watts, Doddridge, &c. men singularly endowed by heaven with grace and holiness, of extensive learning, by which they were qualified to be burning and shining lights in the church of Christ, and though they be dead, are yet speaking for God in their inestimable writings, and many, through the divine blessing, are receiving spiritual and eternal benefit by them. If these holy and great men were alive, or if any like them should offer to join with us in the ordinances of the gospel, if we should reject them because their views of church government are not the same with ours, for any thing appears to me from the divine records, we might justly expect such a reprimand from our final judge as this, By what authority did you refuse to have communion with my servants? and who gave you that authority?

dows of good things to come, but Christ was the body or substance of them, Col. ii. 17. Yet notwithstanding of this weakness of their faith, he ordered them who were stronger in the faith to receive them, (*viz.* into communion) and not to judge or discriminate them for their doubtful thoughts; and gives this reason why they should admit such weak doubting Christians into communion, *viz.* for God hath received them. And if we have the evidences that God hath received any, it would be heaven daring presumption in us to cast them out of communion, for those involuntary weaknesses, or moral infirmities, that may attend them. Our divine Redeemer has given us an example of this in his own conduct, in reference to his apostles, when he tabernacled in our world, they were not only weak in faith and in knowledge, but entertained gross apprehensions of the great design of his coming into the world; instead of looking upon him as a spiritual Saviour, who came upon the gracious design of delivering guilty men from sin and its dreadful fruits, and restore a league of amity and peace between their offended Creator and them, they considered him only as a temporal monarch, who was to erect a secular kingdom on earth, or restore the kingdom to Israel, to more than its ancient dignity and glory; this they were always dreaming of, till the very day he ascended up to heaven, Acts i. 6. But did he cast them out of communion with him because of this error? far from it: but during his personal presence with them, he instructed them in the nature of his kingdom, bore with, and pitied them, under that and other weaknesses, reproved and admonished them with that meekness, love, and compassion peculiar to the Lamb of God. His all-seeing eye, indeed, discerned some good thing within them, and that in a little they would be perfectly freed from that and other guilty mistakes which attended them, when he should pour out the Spirit upon

upon them. If that mind be in us which was in our Lord, or possessed of that truly catholic and Christian spirit, which all the heirs of glory in some measure are to spend one day in God's courts with them that love and fear him would be sweeter to us than a thousand spent any where else, and we would prefer being door-keepers in his house with them, before dwelling in the most pompous tents of wickedness. And, doubtless, those should be our most delightful company on earth, with whom we hope to dwell in heaven thro' endless ages. The mutual and religious converse of holy souls, and especially joining with united hearts in the solemnities of God's public worship, is to them the sweetest pledge and foretaste of future bliss. And they long for, and rejoice in nothing more, than the hope of their making up a part of the general assembly, and church of the first born, that shall convene in the heavenly Jerusalem, and there celebrate the praises of him who sits upon the throne, and the Lamb for ever and ever

Fourthly, Christian fellowship or communion includes in it, an affectionate readiness to converse freely and intimately with all, whom we have reason to believe are the children of God, though they should differ from us in their sentiments about lesser matters.

Christian converse is much inculcated in scripture upon all who profess themselves the disciples of the blessed Jesus, in order to mutual edification and comfort. It is recommended to us by our Lord's example, which has the force of a law to us, as far as it is imitable, and by the example of his apostles and the primitive Christians; and according to our measure of love to God, and all who bear his amiable image, so will we feel ourselves sweetly constrained to embrace every proper opportunity for that purpose. Besides other saints that might be mentioned, David, the man according to God's heart

heart, was eminent for this God-like temper and behaviour. Thus in the forecited text, Psal. cxix. 63. he appealed to the searcher of hearts, that he was a companion of all who feared God, and kept his precepts. Though he was a king and a prophet, yet he made all his companions who feared God, whither they were high or low, rich or poor, wise or weak in knowledge. It is certain there are many differences among good men in this world, some are rich, many are poor, some are strong in spiritual gifts, others weak; but neither their poverty, nor weakness in knowledge and other spiritual endowments, should lessen our esteem and affection for them, for they are all the children of one Father, and the Son of God himself, we are told, is not ashamed to call the meanest of them his brethren, Heb ii. 11. And will any who profess to be the subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ, and expect salvation by him, despise any to whom he condescends so far, as to account his brethren? the profession of such is but gross hypocrisy, and their hopes a delusion. In opposition to this, that excellent saint of God king David, as we have suggested just now, freely and affectionately conversed with all whom he thought were the children of the same God and Father with himself, that he and they might mutually aid and confirm one another in their way to glory, for the same reason he rejoiced to go to the house of God, and join with them in the sacred solemnities there, Ps. xlii. 4, & cxxii. 1. & Ps. xvi. 3. he said to God, tho' his goodness extended not to him, yet it did to the saints, for that is meant, My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight. Though the Lord Jesus be the important person who speaks, or is chiefly the subject of this psalm, and is actually applied to him in the New Testament, yet every body knows, who has any tolerable acquaintance with scripture, that David suffered, did, and said many things in

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his own person, as a type of the Messiah, and we have no reason to doubt that he spake these words as applicable to his own temper and practice to good men. He endeavoured to promote their temporal and everlasting interests, delighted in them as the excellent ones in the earth, esteemed them more honourable and precious, however mean and despicable their external condition in life was, than any ungodly sinner, of whatever exalted rank or quality. Agreeable to this, one of the characters of that happy man who shall dwell with God in heaven is this, In whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord, Psal. xv. 14. Not to multiply instances in order to illustrate and enforce this head of discourse, we shall only add, The great apostle of the Gentiles, when writing to the converted Romans, told them, he longed to see them, to be comforted by the mutual faith of him and them, Rom. i. 12. Christian fellowship or communion therefore includes in it, that mutual esteem and affection that should reign in all good men to one another, upon account of their relation to the blessed God, and in proportion to the degrees of his image which shine in them, whatever their condition be in this world, whether high or low, rich or poor. It includes in it praying for one another, and giving thanks for one another, according to the different circumstances we may be in, and endeavouring to advance the present and future happiness of one another, according to our several abilities, by counsel or advice, and communicating to one another our experiences, for our mutual comfort and edification. This was one way king David maintained communion with the saints, 'Come, said he, and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.' Psal. lxxvi. 16.

Fifthly, Christian fellowship or communion includes

cludes in it, a sincere fellow feeling with one another in our joys and sorrows. The love of common friendship often unites the hearts of men so, that they have, as it were, but one common interest, are affected with each others case as it were their own; much more will divine love, where it reigns, cement the affections of all the members of Christ, and enable them to have a kind of a fellow feeling or sympathy with their fellow members in their pain or ease. This is plainly intimated in such commands as these, ' Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep, Rom. xii 15. remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them,' Heb. xiii. 3. Good men must have fellowship or communion with one another, not only in spiritual privileges, but also in sufferings; we must not only be companions in the kingdom, but companions also in the tribulation and patience of Jesus Christ: Thus the beloved disciple styled himself, when he addressed those Christians to whom he wrote, ' I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,' Rev. i. 9. The apostle Paul commends some of the believing Hebrews for their Christian and affectionate sympathy with their suffering brethren, ' Ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.' Heb. x. 32. 33. They not only actually suffered themselves, by reproaches and afflictions, but owned their Christian brethren when they suffered; they had a fellow feeling with them, received them, stood by them and comforted them. So intimate and near the union, and so tender the affections of real Christians to one another, if grace be in a lively exercise, We shall only add,

Lastly, on this head, Christian communion in-

cludes in it, an affectionate readiness to do good to all the children of God, according to our ability, who stand in need of our kind offices. It is required that our love to the brethren be not only unfeigned, but its sincerity must appear in the real and genuine effects of it. Though others, as we have suggested before, should not be excluded from a share in our beneficent affection, yet our Christian brethren should have the preference, according to the apostle's direction, 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith,' Gal. vi. 10. Our pretended love to our fellow Christians, if destitute of these fruits, when we have a real ability for them, is but a barren complement, a hypocritical show, and is justly censured by an inspired apostle, in those vain pretenders to Christianity, who when they saw their brethren naked, and destitute of daily food, would say to them, 'Depart in peace, be ye warmed, be ye clothed, but gave them no supply for their bodily necessities, put them off with good words instead of good deeds,' James ii. 15, 16. And it is observable when our blessed Saviour gives us an account of the solemn process of the day of final judgment, he ranks them among the number of the wicked, who shall go into everlasting punishment, who gave him no meat when hungry, nor drink when thirsty, nor clothed him when naked, nor visited him when sick and imprisoned; and when they deny the charge, he gives them this remarkable answer, Verily, I say unto you, in as much as ye did it not to the least of these, ye did it not to me, Mat. xxv. 41, &c. Upon the whole, Christian communion includes in it, A high esteem for, and a delightful complacency in, all whom we, in the judgment of rational charity, are obliged to think are the adopted children of the most high God, fellow-heirs with ourselves of the kingdom of glory, thro' one and the same Mediator the Lord Jesus Christ; delighting

Delighting to go to the house of God, and with united affection join with them in the sacred solemnities there. And to the utmost of our power give them faithful advice in their difficulties; minister comfort to them when under afflictions and sufferings: Reprove and admonish them when faulty, and that in the spirit of love and meekness: Cheerfully and freely forgive their offences, as we desire that ours may be forgiven: We must condescend to their weakness, by bearing with their infirmities, by exercising forbearance with them, under their involuntary mistakes. Support their just credit when sullied by false aspersions, and relieve their pressing necessities according to our abilities. Thus we should 'bear one anothers burdens, and fulfil the law of Christ,' as we are commanded. Gal. vi. 2. We proceed to the

II. General, *viz.* To show the necessity of such a temper and behaviour included in Christian communion (as has been explained) in order to our everlasting happiness. But, before I proceed, give me leave to put you in mind of what has already been suggested; that love is the most essential ingredient in, and constitutes true Christian communion, and all the other particulars we have mentioned included in it, are but so many expressions of that sacred principle ruling in the heart; and without it (*viz.* love) there can be no such thing as Christian fellowship, in the scripture sense of the phrase. Let us suppose, That there may be a congregation met together, employed in the acts of public worship, and thereby maintaining external communion with one another, and each member destitute of brotherly love, (without which they can have none to God) such a congregation, would in the sight of heaven be nothing but an assembly of formal hypocrites, and their acts of devotion, flattering words and solemn lies. Nay, we may appeal
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to the consciences of all such, who are apt to break up ministerial or Christian communion for every trifle, without Christ's authority for it, if they are not dead to the feelings of love to God and their Christian brethren. The necessity therefore of this temper and behaviour will appear from these following things.

First, The relation we profess to stand in, to our God and Saviour, obliges us to aspire after it. All true Christians, as has been suggested already, are the adopted children of one God and Father; however different they may be, as to external circumstances, or in reference to some peculiarities of sentiments as to lesser matters. They are all animated and sanctified by the same holy Spirit, and profess the same common faith in the Lord Jesus. They are all the subjects of his redeeming love, the objects of his providential protection, and his mediatory care and affection. Nay he is not ashamed to call them his brethren. Upon these accounts, we should endeavour as far as in our power, to love them whom he loves, and join with them in all the solemnities of religious worship. And, doubtless this will be the temper and behaviour of all who have a genuine affection to the blessed God, and his Son. This will appear, if we consider, That as natural relation strengthens natural affection, so does a spiritual relation strengthen Christian love. Our fellow creatures may be considered in a double relation, either as men, or as Christians, and for there is a different kind of regard and affection due to them. We are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves, that is, all men who partake of the same common nature with ourselves. But besides this, there is what is called in scripture, a brotherly love, and inculcated upon Christians to love one another as such. Christian love, not only supposes

eth natural affection as the foundation of it; but

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sublimateth and refineth it to a higher degree of excellency. The light of the gospel, does not extinguish the light of nature, but rather perfects it; which leads me,

Secondly. To observe, that this temper and behaviour of Christians to one another, is of such infinite moment and importance, that it's represented as inseparably connected with love to God himself: 'Every one who believeth, that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God, and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him,' 1 John v. 1. And, doubtless it must be so, for love to God and his children, is the same in respect both of the object and principle. It has been hinted already, that the great reason why the saints love one another is his image which each of them bear. He that loves the Father for his own sake; cannot but love his Child for the same reason. And as love to God and his children, is the same in respect of the object, viz. holiness; and differ only in degrees, so it is one in respect of principle: Love to our brother is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, as well as love to God; hence he is styled, *a Spirit of love*, 2 Tim. i. 7. and is given of God to all the saints as such, as well as of power and a sound mind. The fruits of the Spirit are mentioned in the epistle to the Galatians, Chap. v. *and love is placed in the front of them all.* Love to God and our Christian brethren are not two distinct gracious principles but one. The same blessed agent who disposes good men to love their maker, disposes them also to love and delight in one another. And therefore, an inspired Apostle told his Thessalonian converts, 1 Thess. iv. 9. that he had no need to exhort them to love the brethren, if they had a genuine love to God himself. But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

nother. Which text methinks, is enough to make the ears of many professors in this generation to tingle, and strike their souls with terror, if they would allow themselves to think. For it is too evident, that their uncharitable speeches against, and behaviour to those who differ from them in some lesser matters; and perhaps in nothing at all, but in name, betray their dreadful want of this divine teaching. To be taught of God, is a phrase of the same import, with that of being drawn by him, efficaciously moved, and acted by his Spirit and grace. 'No man, says our Saviour, can come to me except the Father who sent me draw him. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be taught of God. Every man therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.' Hearing and learning of the Father, is explained by being drawn, or powerfully attracted by him. The meaning therefore of this expression, you have been taught of God, is, your hearts have been powerfully inclined, and drawn into the exercise of this love to one another. And this affectionate regard for all who appear to be God's regenerate children, is given as the distinguishing evidence whether we be in a state of spiritual life or death. We know (says the Apostle John) 'that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.' 1 John iii. 14, 15. Nay the same Apostle tells us, 1 John iv. 20. with the greatest strength of argument, that the love we pretend to God, is not genuine and sincere, unless it be productive of love to all who bear his image. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: 'for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' Some, perhaps will say, though they do not love all whom they

they have reason to think, are the children of God; yet they do not hate them. To such, I would say, deceive not yourselves, for though it is certain in a strict and proper sense; there is a difference between not loving a man, and hating him. Yet it is equally true that what is styled hatred in some passages of holy write, is the want of sincere affection; and this seems plainly to be the meaning of the Apostle, in this text, and therefore loveth not his brother, explains what is meant by hating him.

Thirdly, As no external acts of piety towards God, can be acceptable without love to him; so no external duties to our Christian brethren are pleasing to him, unless they spring from a sincere affection to them. It is this that gives them a divine tincture, and renders them genuine resemblances, and imitations of the divine benignity and goodness. To forbear revenge without love, instead of being a Christian grace, it is only stupidity or cowardice; but if it springs from this sacred principle, it is true meekness and patience. To give alms without love, is but vain-glorious ostentation, but when they are the effects of love, and a compassionate sense of the necessities of our brethren; then they are acceptable to God through Christ. To do a good action, merely for the sake of a name, or self-interest, is but an act of hateful policy. But to do it from that compassionate affection that considers our brother's case as our own, and for God's sake, whose image he bears; this is true Christian justice. To join in the solemnities of religious worship with our fellow Christians, without love to them, is a piece of vile hypocrisy, insulting of God, and mocking them. But when we do it in obedience to the divine command; and our souls animated with love to God, and to our fellow-worshippers for his sake; this is true Christian fellowship. Nay, so great a stress does God lay upon it, that he refuses our

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acts of devotion towards him, if not accompanied with an unfeigned affection to our fellow-Christians, and will not admit of our offerings on his altar, till we are reconciled to our offended brother, Matth. v. 24, 25.

Fourthly, Love to all the children of God, is mentioned as the most essential and vital part of true religion. You may observe to this purpose, that the Apostle Paul speaking of those three comprehensive graces, of faith, hope, charity, or love, gives the preference to the last. 'And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these, is love,' 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Though charity or love necessarily includes in it, love to our God and Saviour; yet that it includes in it also, love to all our Christian brethren, is evident from that large and excellent description he gives of it, from the 4th to the 8th verse. This unfeigned and enlarged affection to all, we have reason to believe, are the genuine disciples of the blessed Jesus, is not only an essential part of true godliness, but there can be none without it. Though we should be possessed of all spiritual gifts, and miraculous powers, as appears from that awful passage, wherewith the Apostle prefaces this description of love, in the first three verses of the chapter. And therefore we find in scripture, that love to our Christian brethren is resolved in to the spirit of holiness, as its original cause: It is part of the work of the Holy Spirit in renewed souls. This I have suggested already, and therefore shall only beg your attention to what the Apostle Peter speaks unto this purpose. 'Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently,' 1 Peter i. 22. And the end of the commandment, we are told by another inspired writer, 'is love out of a pure heart, and of a good
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‘conscience, and of faith unfeigned,’ 1 Tim. i. 5. By the end of the commandment, he means, that the great scope and design both of the law and gospel, is to advance and perfect our love to God and one another. And this love is said to proceed from a pure heart, and faith unfeigned, both which are the immediate production of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration, and elsewhere true faith in the great Redeemer is thus described, *viz.* it works by love and purifieth the heart; it works out into that love which exercises itself towards our Christian brethren as well as to our common Father God. And without love to them, we have neither love to him, nor faith in the Saviour: Hence when our Lord required the exercise of love, in order to the forgiving an offended brother; and the disciples having put the question, how often they should forgive? and he replied unto, seventy times seven, they knowing the great need of faith in order to the exercise of such love, said, Lord increase our faith.

Fifthly, The obligations the Lord Jesus has laid us under to love him, oblige us also to love and maintain communion, with his sincere followers. This motive he himself proposes to us. ‘A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another,’ John xiii. 34. And this same Apostle proposes and enlarges upon the same argument; ‘Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,’ 1 John iii. 16. We cannot indeed imitate the love of the blessed Redeemer in every instance, as a rule of our love to our Christian brethren: We cannot be substituted in one another’s stead, as a propitiation for sin, as he was in ours. He so loved us, we are told, ‘as to give himself for us,’ Gal. ii. 20. He is that good Shepherd, (as he styles himself) who loved

‘ his sheep so, as to give himself for them.’ John x. 15. ‘ He loved us so, as to give himself an offering and sacrifice to God, in order to make an atonement for our guilt,’ Eph. v. 2. ‘ He so loved us, as to wash us from our sins in his own blood,’ Rev. i. 5. It is impossible, I say, to love our Christian brethren in this respect, as our compassionate Saviour did us; yet we ought to have such a sincere and ardent affection for all who love him, so as to lay down our life for them, if it can promote their present and endless happiness: And much more should we imitate him in these lesser instances of his love, he express’d to his disciples in the days of his flesh. Let us take a view of some of them, and endeavour through the aids of his grace to aspire after the same divine temper, and imitate the same behaviour, to all who appear to be his sincere followers. His whole life indeed, was one continued exercise of compassionate love, both to the bodies and souls of men; so that it was most justly said of him, that he went about doing good. But he shew’d his love to his disciples in his unwearied diligence and care; to instruct them in the great mysteries of the kingdom of God. In his suiting his instructions to their low and weak capacities, and delivering divine truths as they were capable to bear them. He pitied them under their manifold infirmities and mistakes, and used the most gentle and tender methods to rectify their judgments. He vindicated their character when slandered and accused falsely. He express’d his love to them also, by his reasonable admonitions, and reproofs when faulty, by his tender sympathy with them, when in afflictions and troubles, and ministering suitable consolations to them, under their desponding fears. In his kindly approving and accepting all the instances of their fidelity and duty. He condescended to the lowest offices of love, even of washing their feet; and gave merciful allowances for their lamented failures, and

unvoluntary mistakes. In such like instances should we express our affection to all his sincere followers for his sake, and in obedience to his commands, and in imitation of his example. I need scarce observe to any thinking person, that to withdraw ourselves from, or exclude any from communion with us, in religious worship, or to refuse to converse freely and affectionately with them, who, according to the tenor of the gospel, we are obliged, in our deliberate judgment, to consider as the children of God (without our authority for such a behaviour be specified by the Lord Jesus Christ) is a temper and behaviour directly opposite to his, and to the whole genius of his holy religion, which breathes out a spirit of love and peace.

Sixthly, The commands of our God and Saviour oblige us to endeavour after an affectionate union and communion with all our fellow Christians, or with such whom we are obliged to think are the adopted and regenerated children of God.

That this temper and behaviour are inculcated upon Christians to one another we might show at large, both from the Old and New Testament; some of these commands we have instanced already, as in John xiii. 34. The same thing is implied in that charge our Lord gave his apostles, and with them, all who profess to be his followers, 'Have peace one with another,' Mark ix. 50. 'Let us follow after the things which make for peace,' says the great apostle of the Gentiles, 'and things where-with one may edify another,' Rom. xiv. 9. How did this same apostle charge and adjure the converted Philippians, by all that was dear and precious to them, if they had any regard for the grace and most glorious privileges of the gospel, to maintain Christian communion, or affectionate union among themselves; 'If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any communion

' or fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mer-
 ' cy. Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, hav-
 ' ing the same love, being of one accord, of one
 ' mind,' Phil. ii. 1, 2. Can any real Christian hear
 such a warm and melting address from the Spirit of
 God, to maintain love and communion with our
 brethren in Christ, and yet be unconcerned about it?
 nay, ready to break it with every one who does not
 study a compliance with their humour in all things;
 impossible: And therefore the apostle insinuates that
 they never experienced any consolation in Christ nor
 any comfort of his love, nor communion with the
 Holy Spirit, and that they are destitute of bowels of
 mercy to their fellow Christians, if they be not solli-
 citously careful to maintain communion with them;
 nay, he hints in the verses following that such are un-
 der the governing influence of pride and vain glory,
 which are generally the guilty cause of the unwar-
 rantable breach of Christian communion, and all
 who are animated by such unhallowed tempers,
 however amiable their professions may appear in the
 sight of men, yet the scripture every where repre-
 sents them as the objects of God's peculiar abhor-
 rence. Those therefore who refuse to maintain
 communion with their Christian brethren, without
 being able to produce their warrant from scripture
 for so doing, are as guilty of transgressing the com-
 mands of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the notorious
 drunkard, or profane swearer, and must be viewed
 in as odious a light as those flagitious sinners, by all
 who have a just veneration for his authority, which
 is as much despised in the one case as the other, only
 it extenuates the guilt in some that they do it igno-
 rantly, as the apostle Paul, before his conversion,
 persecuted Christ in his members. And as they are
 guilty of transgressing the laws of Christ, who break
 up Christian communion with their brethren, with-
 out his authority for it, so they thereby declare that
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they are destitute of the temper and character of his genuine disciples, this is evident from what is said above; to which give me leave to add, that he makes mutual love, to be the badge of his sincere followers, 'By this, says he, shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,' John xiii. 35. intimating that all his true disciples cannot but love one another, the law of the Spirit of life, which reigns within them, sweetly constrains them to exercise this holy disposition of soul to one another; he gives this as a rule to men also, by which they may be able to distinguish between the children of God, and hypocrites or impostors in religion. Now as there can be no Christian fellowship or communion without love, in the sense of scripture, so to break up communion with any, whom we are obliged to look upon as the disciples of the blessed Jesus, I mean without his authority, betrays the want of love both to him and them. To love or have a delightful complacency in any who fall into such sins, for which he orders us to behave to them as heathens and publicans, would be our sin. The reproof God gave Jehoshaphat king of Judah, by the prophet Jehu, would be too applicable to us in such a case, Shouldst thou love them that hate the Lord? A divisive or factious spirit, without just reason, is so opposite to the temper of real Christians, that it is given as the mark of carnality, or of men under the power of un sanctified nature, 1 Cor. iii. 3. 'For are ye not carnal,' said the apostle to those of the church of Corinth, who had fallen into party names, not for the sake of religion, but to please themselves) 'for whereas there is among you 'envying, or zeal, and strife, and divisions: Are ye not carnal and walk as men?' that is, unholy men. And we are intreated by the Spirit of inspiration, carefully to observe and mark such who needlessly cause divisions and raise stumbling blocks, which disturb that communion and harmony which should

should reign among the children of the God of peace and avoid them, as we would do persons infected with the pestilence. What strong and winning arguments did this same inspired writer use with believers in the church of Corinth, in order to enforce his exhortation to love and union among themselves, and what God said to them by him, he speaks the same things to us and all Christians to the end of the world. The apostle having put them in mind of the grace of God to them, in calling them into the fellowship or communion of his Son, addressed them thus: 'Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,' 1 Cor. i. 10. *q. d.* I adjure you in his name, and for his sake, if you have any reverence for his authority, as a sovereign, if you have any love and regard for him, as a Saviour, if you have any gratitude to God for his marvellous grace, in calling you into the communion of his Son, maintain communion among yourselves, and guard against unnecessary divisions, which are dishonourable to your God, your Saviour, to your Christian profession, and prejudicial to your own immortal souls

Again, our own felicity is promoted by love and communion with our Christian brethren; we can have no access to God without it, nor communion with him. This is evident from the whole strain of holy write, and particularly from a text quoted before, when our Lord designing the instruction of Christians, speaks in the language of the Jews, under the Old Testament dispensation; 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembreth thy brother hath ought against thee; leave thy gift before the altar,' (do not presume to offer it to God, for he will certainly reject it with abhorrence, except thou

go) 'and be reconciled first to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift,' as if our Lord had said, Unless you use all possible methods, in order that mutual love may be exercised between thy brother and thee, there can be no spiritual converse between God and thee, all your duties will be like strange fire upon his altar. Besides, mutual love and communion among the children of God, are blessed means appointed by him, for growing in a meetness for heaven; what the apostle speaks of the members of the natural body, holds true of the members of Christ's mystical body, there is no one can say unto another, 'I have no need of thee; there are none so great or knowing, but may receive advantage, one way or other, from the meanest of the sincere followers of Christ. This some of the most eminent men, for piety and learning, have confessed, they have experienced their faith and hope strengthened, their love to God and men quickened, their zeal for the interest of religion inflamed, rendered more humble, meek, self-denied, and heavenly-minded. And with this view, Christian fellowship is warmly recommended to us by the Spirit of inspiration; 'Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; 'so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel, Prov. xxvii. 9. Iron sharpneth iron; so a man sharpneth the countenance of his friend, ver. 17. 'A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is 'born for adversity,' Prov. xvii. 17. See also Eccl. iv. from the 9. to the 13. verse. These texts plainly intimate, the spiritual advantages that flow from Christian communion. Should any restrain their meaning to the pleasure and profit of ordinary friendship in secular matters, still it must be allowed that a holy and heavenly friendship among the saints is much more valuable, sweet, and advantageous, which is not excluded, if not chiefly intended, in these and other passages of holy write. According-ly we find, both in scripture and common history,

that in times of a general corruption of manners, the saints, taught as it were by a divine instinct, in order that they might not be infected, or carried down the stream, as well as a becoming deference to the commands of their God and Saviour, have always been zealous in maintaining a holy concord and communion among themselves. Thus when the generality of the priests and people of the Jewish nation, had dreadfully corrupted their ways before God, we are told, ' Then they that feared the Lord ' spake often one to another, (this temper and behaviour was so pleasing to God, that we are also told) he ' hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance ' was written before him, for them that feared the Lord ' and thought upon his name.' Mal. iii. 16. and notwithstanding the flames of persecution raged so furiously against the primitive Christians, the spirit of inspiration gives this honourable testimony of them, ' That they continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and in communion (*viz.* with one another) ' and in breaking of bread, (or partaking of the ' Lord's supper) and in prayers. And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and ' breaking of bread, &c. Acts ii. 42, 46.

Lastly, The regard we owe to the honour of God, obliges us to maintain the communion of saints. There can be none who believe his existence, and that they entirely depend upon him for life, being and all things, but must acknowledge that they are under the most indispensable obligations to promote his honour and glory; and this is one way he esteems himself more eminently honoured, by his people joining with one heart in social worship. For this reason, we are told, ' He loves the gates of Zion ' more than all the dwellings of Jacob,' Psal. lxxxvii. 2. that is, he delights more in their public communion, than in all their private dwellings. Though every particular Christian honours God, yet they glorify

glorify him, in a more peculiar manner, by mutual love, and public communion in his ordinances of worship. It is in reference to this, he bestows so many amiable and honourable titles upon his church; such as, His glory, Isa. xlv. 13. The house of his glory, chap. vi. 7. The beauty of his ornament, Ezek. vii. 20. His honour is said to dwell there, (*viz.* among his saints assembled to worship) or the tabernacle of his glory, Psal. xxvi. 8. And that he himself has chosen Zion, or his church, for his habitation his rest, a place where he has desired to dwell in, Ps. cxxxii. 13. 14. and what we translate, I will prepare him a habitation, or tabernacle, the Greek interpreters (who often rather give the sense than a literal translation of the words) render it, I will glorify him, *viz.* by building a tabernacle, or house for public worship, Exod. xv. 2. And as God is more eminently honoured by the communion of his saints, in the solemnities of public worship, so many great blessings are promised to them in this way. We have already observed, that he is represented to dwell in his church, or among his saints in communion; to which we may add these following promises, such as, He will rejoice over them with joy, he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over them with singing, Zeph. iii. 17. The Spirit of inspiration speaks of these blessings, which God bestows upon his people in communion, as if they were his most choice and peculiar mercies; 'The Lord who made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion, Psal. cxxxiv. 3. And agreeable to this it is promised, 'In this mountain, (that is his church,) will the Lord of hosts make a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow,' &c. Isa. xxv. 6. 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures,' Psal. xxxvi. 8. That peace, divine satisfaction, joy and strength good men feel communicated to them, from God, in their private

vate and secret devotions, are but like drops, but in public communion with his people, in his church, or ordinances of worship, these sacred drops become rivers. It is there where he is said, with great emphasis, to have commanded the blessing, even life for ever more, Psal. cxxxiii. 3. Though these, with other such like precious promises that might be mentioned, seem to be made to the church under the Old Testament dispensation, yet I trust there are few, who are acquainted with the sacred oracles and the analogy of faith, who will make that an argument to excuse themselves from that temper and behaviour, included in Christian fellowship or communion: especially as we are assured, by the Spirit of inspiration, speaking in the New Testament, that whatever was written aforetime, was written for our edification and comfort, and no promise is of private interpretation; besides, the most of these promises we have quoted from the psalms and the prophets, refer chiefly to the days of the gospel, and the mutual and happy communion of Christians, in its sacred ordinances, which any intelligent reader may easily observe, upon taking a survey of the different contexts, from which these promises are cited.

I shall take leave to add, that the honour of God is so much injured by the unnecessary breach of Christian communion, he expresses his resentment against it by many awful threatnings. Thus, speaking of the times under the gospel, he says, 'And it shall be, that whoso will not come up, of all the families of the earth, unto Jerusalem, to worship the king the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain,' Zech. xiv. 17. that is, those who refuse to associate themselves with his people in worship, shall have no saving blessing from him. Besides many threatnings which we might instance, denounced by God for the same reason, I shall only observe, that, in his construction of things, to withdraw ourselves from communion with our
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Christian brethren in divine worship, even for fear of persecution, is a piece (to say no worse) of apostasy from the Christian faith. 'Let us consider one another, (says the apostle to the Heb. chap. x 24, 25.) to provoke one another to love and to good works Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.' The duties inculcated upon us in these two verses, include all what Christian communion imports, viz. a tender and affectionate care of, and watching over one another, observing the gifts, the graces, the temptations, and dangers of one another. And is the foundation of all those mutual duties, of warning, exhorting, and admonishing one another; duties (as a pious commentator observes on this text) are, God knows, generally lost among us, and with them is the glory of the Christian religion departed from us. And as this happy temper is the foundation of all those private offices of love, so the want of it, as the Apostle intimates, is often the unhallowed cause of many breaking communion with their Christian brethren, or forsaking the assembling of themselves together with them in public worship. Tho' a great many fancy there is no evil in it, yet we may see how heinous the guilt of such is, in God's sight, intimated in the tremendous threatening annexed to it, in the 26th, and 27th verses following.

Before we proceed to the improvement of this discourse, it may be necessary to set before you, a view of their characters described in the word of God, whom we are obliged from a regard to divine authority to break up Christian communion with. For as on the one hand, the Lord Jesus has given us no such discretionary power, to break up communion with our brethren in him, at our own arbitrary pleasure, when ever they happen to do any thing that

that is displeasing to us. So on the other hand, he has set bounds to it, lest any should carry it too far, through easiness of temper, natural affection, or friendship.

1st, Incurable or obstinate sinners, are marked out by our Lord, as persons with whom his followers, are to have no fellowship or communion; as you may see, Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17. In which verses, our blessed Saviour plainly intimates, that we must use all possible methods to bring our offending brother to repentance, before we break up Christian communion with him; neither is it for doubtful opinions, as it is evident, from the words our Lord uses in the original: But if thy brother sin or trespass against thee, that is, when thou seest any one in danger of perishing by his sins against thee, go (not only tell, as in the translation) but convince him: So the same verb is rendered in other places of the New Testament, and is used to signify one person charging another with a crime, with such indisputable evidence, that the delinquent can neither refuse nor palliate the offence: But in case he shall be stubborn, and neither acknowledge his fault, nor express repentance for it, do not presently give him over; then take with thee one or two more, that by their concurring testimony to his guilt, he may be more easily convinced, or rendered, self-condemned. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church, viz. to the assembly of those who have the government of the church, and are to provide for the order, peace, and discipline of it, 1 Cor. v. 3, 4. and 2 Cor. ii. 6. And if after all, he remains obstinate and hardened, hold him as a profane man, wholly unfit for the communion of saints, as the heathens and publicans were among the Jews. The same method is to be used, with every offending brother, before we break up Christian communion with them, which is plainly
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intimated, in that apostolic injunction to reject a heretic, after the first and second admonition. Titus iii. 10 And the same Apostle mentions several infamous characters; if a man who pretends to be a Christian, and is guilty of any of them, we must have no fellowship with him. 'If any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat,' 1 Cor. v. 11. We are also commanded to withdraw from every brother, who walks disorderly, or not according to the doctrines and laws of the gospel. 2 Thess. iii. 6. Slothful, indolent people, who are able to work, and will not, for their own support and families, seem to be the disorderly persons chiefly intended in that text; as appears from the 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, verses of the same chapter. And as we suggested before, we must mark and avoid, or turn away from such who cause divisions and offences, or scandals*. Men are the causes of these criminal dif-

* Offences, a great many understand this word, offence, which we often meet with in the sacred scripture, to signify something that displeases, or provokes to anger. Because I suppose that the word is used in ordinary speech among us, to express that idea: And the word scandal, which approaches nearer the sound, as well as the meaning of the original, raises in their mind the idea of some foul or dishonourable action. In order to remove this mistake, let it be observed, that an ancient and learned critic, supposed that the word *scandalon*, translated into our language, offence, was the name of an instrument or trap, which people used for catching mice, wolves, foxes, &c. And has been adopted into the sacred style, to signify any thing, that impedes men in their duties to God, and one another. Whatever may be in this supposition, we will not venture to say; only, it is certain, that the word is derived from another, that signifies to halt; and the word itself is used to signify any thing that is in a man's way, a stone, a piece of wood, or any thing against which he that walks or runs stumbles or falls, or at least, hurts him, so that it stops his progress. And the word in scripture, is used to signify any thing

disorders, by these following means: Such as an undue use of their Christian liberty, in things indifferent, or even in things lawful, to the prejudice of their weaker brethren. See how the great Apostle of the Gentiles, reasons against such an uncharitable behaviour, through the whole of the xiv. Chap. of his epistle to the Romans, especially ver. 10, 13, 15, 19, 20, 21. And the viii. Chap of his first epistle to the Corinthians, particularly, ver. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Besides this, men are guilty of causing divisions and offences among Christians, by corrupt doctrine, by an irregular or bad example, breaking up Christian communion with, or shutting out others from communion with them, without any warrant from the Lord Jesus Christ; but only to gratify their own pride or revenge. By discouraging their fellow-Christians, with a supercilious, proud, overbearing behaviour; by reproaches, unhallowed oppositions and dissensions. And, in a word, spiritual tyranny, which the Apostle styles, domineering or over-ruling God's heritage. 1 Peter v. 3. This is so contrary to the practice of the Son of God when he was on earth; so contrary to the commands he laid upon his apostles and ministers of his gospel, to the end of time; so contrary to the rights of conscience, and the liberties of human nature; And, in a word, so opposite to the whole genius and design of our holy religion; that we have no reason to wonder, that we are commanded to mark such (I mean who are guilty of spiritual oppression) and have no communion with them. These things which I have mentioned above, have been the unhappy causes of divisions and offences among Christians,

thing that tends to obstruct people in their Christian course causes them stand still, or turns them aside from the paths of religion, either in respect of temper or practice. And therefore agreeable to its native meaning, our translators have rendered it elsewhere, a stumbling block, and an occasion of falling, Rom. xi. 9. and xiv. 13.

tians, in the different periods of the Christian church, this is so well known to all who are acquainted with the word of God and history, that I need not spend time to prove: However, men may extenuate their guilt to their consciences, and make light of offending their fellow-Christians, or of throwing stumbling-blocks in their way, from a pretence that they are poor, or weak, as to intellectual abilities. Yet this will not excuse them; for the Lord Jesus who is to be our final Judge, pronounces heavy woes against such, who shall offend, or cause any of his little ones to stumble *, Matt. xviii 6, 7. Nay, such sinners are particularly mentioned by him, and he assures us, that they shall have their portion in unquenchable fire, as well as those who appear more enormous in the view of the world. 'The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth,' Matth. xiii. 41, 42.

There are some indeed who take offence where there is none given, nor designed; their peevish humour and perverse obstinacy, inclines them to take exceptions, and offence without any just foundation, and will not maintain Christian communion with any, but with such who are of the like temper and complexion of mind with themselves: And though the most condescending methods be used to gain them, yet nothing will satisfy, unless we violate the laws of conscience to please them: Such are doubt-

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* By little ones here, our Lord does not mean such who are so in respect of age, or young ones. For such as are incapable of believing in him, and of being offended, or stumbling in the sense of the word. But small and contemptible in the eyes of men, for the poverty of their condition, and want of talents of their abilities, and little too in their own eyes; being clothed with the grace of humility.

leis among the number who cause divisions and offences.

We shall now conclude this discourse, with some practical improvement.

From what has been said, we may justly infer, That there is but little of the Spirit of Jesus, and of his holy religion, breathes in many who have great pretensions to it in this degenerate age. The temper and behaviour included in my text, and which we have been explaining, was not only recommended by our divine Master in his holy example, but it is also made the distinguishing badge of all his genuine disciples; and is mentioned in my text, as the only evidence of our being in a state of holiness, and acceptance with God, through the atoning death of his Son. But it is ground of lamentation, that through the ignorance, follies, passions, and imperious pride of many, that God-like temper is turned out of the question, and love to party-names, schemes, or principles, takes place in its stead. How honourable was that character, which the mutual love and communion of the primitive Christians extorted from their heathen enemies? when they cried out with admiration, Behold how these Christians love one another! But what a reproach is it to many who bear that venerable name in this age, concerning whom it may be said, Behold how they disgust, revile, and hate one another, and that for no reason, but such as their own ignorant, wild, and irregular zeal, or ill nature suggest to them. Some of the ancients, tell us, that the mutual love and communion of the primitive Christians were so amiably conspicuous, that they not only became a proverb among the heathen, but also were the happy means of bringing vast numbers of them over to the Christian faith. And doubtless next to miracles, there can be nothing more engag-

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ing, or convincing to strangers of the divine original of our holy religion, than to see the power and spirit of it express'd in the lives of its professors. On the other hand, when evil surmises, mutual shyness, bitter animosities and reflections prevail among them, by these, infidels are confirmed in their infidelity, and the mouths of enemies opened to blaspheme God and his gospel.

By way of direction, give me leave to beg your attention, to the following particulars.

First, Make the word of God your study, which is the only infallible rule of faith and manners, and which is to be the rule of our final judgment at the last day, John xii. 48. These sacred records contain all things necessary, to make us wise unto salvation, all things necessary for the government of the Christian church in general, as well as for the conduct of every particular person. In the holy scriptures, the great head of the church, has recorded the terms of Christian communion, and has not left it to us, to make, or unmake them at our pleasure. And whatever name they bear, who dare break up communion with others, or shut others out of communion with them but upon these terms, he has declared, they are at once guilty of invading the province of the Son of God, and of betraying themselves to be animated by the very spirit of antichrist. Their pretences to maintain order, and aversion to certain party-names, that some have assumed to themselves, or the world have imposed upon them, can never extenuate the guilt of such, in the sight of God, nor men who allow themselves to think. These pretences have been made in all ages for authorizing unscriptural excommunications, depositions, nay, of shedding deluges of innocent blood: The great question with Christians, should be in such cases

cases, whether the breach of order complained of, be stamped with Christ's authority, or not; if it be, doubtless it is a sufficient reason for breaking up communion with all such, viz. if they remain hardened and obstinate, after using the methods he himself directs us to in a text formerly cited. But if the order be merely human, especially if it appears to impede, instead of having a tendency to promote the great interests of religion, or inroach upon the province of the great Redeemer, who only has a right to give laws to the souls of men. To shut out any who appear to be good men, from communion with us, for the breach of such order. is the very soul of popery, that enemy to all religion, reason, and common sense. And yet this is the way of many in this age who call themselves protestants: Methinks such have reason to blush to assume to themselves such an honourable name, or the more honourable name, I mean, Christian, as their temper stands in a direct opposition to both. As for party names, they are nothing in the sight of God, neither should they be in ours, but only as those who sustain them, are for, or against truth and righteousness: However, many without giving themselves the trouble to examine matters for a very name, break up communion with their Christian brethren as if it were a duty of no importance, though there is not one duty so often, and so warmly inculcated upon us in holy write, and none more indispensibly necessary, for the honour of God, our Saviour, and our own salvation: Or they seem to fancy that none are Christians, but such whose sentiments in every thing tally with their own. In opposition to this narrow and selfish principle, we are obliged to look upon them as Christians, in every place who call upon the name of Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours, 1 Cor. i. 2. And who profess one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord

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one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6. And though there may be some little difference in opinion concerning some of these, it immediately declares the want of a charitable spirit, for men to null one another's Christianity. What peace, union, and love would be soon produced in the Christian world? if such plain gospel-rules as these were attended to with reverence, and carefully observed. 'I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy in the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness, and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3. 'Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way,' Rom. xiv. 10, 13. 'Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another,' Rom. xiv. 19. If these and such-like divine precepts, I say, had been always attended to, by all who profess themselves Christians, with that reverence and holy zeal that their authority and importance require, how beautiful and glorious would the visible church of Christ appear! Surely fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. None of those fiery disputes, nor angry quarrels, about things that have no tendency to edify, would ever have been heard in her, and have been the dreadful causes of tearing her in so many pieces, and of banishing love to God and men out of the hearts of the greatest part of professors.

Secondly, Be much in fervent prayer to God for his holy Spirit, that you may have an experimental know-

knowledge of the transforming power and efficacy of our holy religion upon your own spirits. All real Christians have this in some measure ; hence the great Apostle of the Gentiles, describes the glorious effects the gospel produced upon the converted Romans, by the phrase of their being cast into the mould or form ; of that doctrine delivered to them, as that text should be rendered, Rom. vi. 17. The gospel of Christ when accompanied with the Holy Spirit, changes and fashions the minds of men into the likeness of it, as the mould doth the metal that is cast into it. And that happy change wrought upon the souls of sinners, from sin to grace in regeneration is express, by the figure of God's writing his law upon their hearts, and putting it in their inward parts. And without this happy change, there can be no true Christian communion ; nay, the want of it has been, and still is the ordinary cause of the external breach of it. Those who have least regard for the commands of God, are always most zealous for the commandments of men, or human institutions. Hence there is nothing more evident both from sacred and profane history, than that where one has been cast out of communion (excommunicated, deposed, or call it what you will) for heresy, or immoralities, ten thousands have been, nay murdered for non-compliance with the commands of men, in opposition to the commands of God. And all this by professed Christians, though the world may know (by a rule that one gives who cannot err in judgment : ' By their fruits ye shall know them. ') that they are strangers to what Christianity means, which teaches and effectually enables men who experience its transforming influence, to dwell in love, and thereby dwell in the God of love and mercy : 1 John iv. 16. It is owing to the same cause (I mean the want of an experimental acquaintance with the power of religion on the soul) that many who profess to be zealous Christians, are

so fickle and changeable in their love, and communion with one another. They must be great strangers to the public, or live very retired, who have not had frequent opportunities to observe many expressing the warmest affection for one another, and such inseparable companions, as if one soul only had possessed them all, and the time they spent in the company of one another, they esteemed the happiest hours of their life; but all on a sudden, this uncommon affection and friendship ceased, and ended in shyness and estrangement, and the parties themselves could not tell the reason of this wonderful change, if it be not perhaps such as children would give, they happened to cross one another's humour.

Thirdly, Guard against uncharitable thoughts and rash censures of any whom you have reason to think are the children of God; as these are directly opposite to that great law of love, so they are often the unhappy causes of the breach of communion among Christians. There are a great many who put the worst construction upon the words and actions of their Christian brethren, which may be indifferent in themselves, and innocently intended, merely because they are not agreeable to their inclination and judgment, and if they differ from them in sentiment, even in reference to lesser matters, and sometimes in nothing but words, with a kind of diabolical dexterity they dress them out in the most ludicrous and odious names to the world, to excite the spite and rage of others against them. And this they treat their brethren as the ancient heathen did the primitive Christians, who cloathed them in the skins of wild beasts, that other savage animals might devour them with greater keenness. Or if they hear a report to the prejudice of a fellow Christian, without waiting for better information, or following our Lord's direction, they presently take offence, and spread the

the slander; 'Report, say they, and we will report 'it,' Jer. xx. 10. It is well known this has been, and still is, the temper and practice of many professors, and in all this they fancy they are obeying the dictates of a laudable zeal. That it is zeal, we cannot refuse, for the spirit of inspiration styles it so, but at the same time, he tells us it is devilish, James iii. 14, 15. But if ye have bitter envyings, in the original it is bitter zeal. But love, which is the foundation as well as the bond of all true Christian communion, will dispose us to believe and hope the best of our Christian brethren, 1 Cor. xiii. 7. It will not suffer us to give way to suspicions and surmises, which cannot be supported by good evidence, nor admit prejudices upon uncertain reports, without examining the truth of them before they make impressions. And in respect of those who differ from us in lesser circumstances, it will teach us to hope that they are sincere in their searches to know the will of God as well as we, especially if they be doubtful opinions, and therefore avoid censuring of them for differing from us, as we should think it uncharitable rashness in them to censure us for things we think are right, and that they have a right to judge for themselves as well as we, and that we are not infallible more than they. Such allowances as these for our fellow-Christians will love suggest to us, if we be under its sweet influences, and so treat one another with kindness and forbearance.

Fourthly, Guard against a morose and unconvertible temper and behaviour, which is often the unhappy cause of the breach of Christian communion. We are commanded to give no offence to the Jews, nor to the Greeks, nor to the church of God, 1 Cor. x. 32. and therefore all who have a zealous regard to the divine authority, will endeavour to direct their behaviour so, as to support and strengthen the law of mutual love between them and their Christi-

an brethren ; they will chearfully set themselves to think upon the most proper methods to maintain it, and as carefully avoid every thing that would have the least tendency to break it. On the other hand, those people who pretend to set a high value upon Christian love and communion, confute their own pretensions, if it appears that the prevalent turn of their temper is sour, pettish, exceptious, supercilious and untractable. Such a temper, and behaviour to any, whether to Greek or Jew, is criminal, and a contradiction to the temper and behaviour of the meek and humble Jesus, and to the whole strain of his holy religion. And it is still more odious, when religion is made the pretence for it, as if that which was designed by heaven to refine mens minds and behaviour, had a tendency to banish humanity and good manners out of the world. Surely such persons do not consider what stumbling-blocks they lay before a profane world, nor the authority of God who enjoins them in scripture, to treat every man with discretion and civility, and to be kindly affected to all. And this has been exemplified by saints of the greatest name recorded in holy write, as we might instance in Abraham, the father of the faithful and friend of God, when treating with the sons of Heth, and the apostle Paul, that great proficient in holiness, when addressing himself to Felix, Festus, Agrippa. The commands of God, the example of those and other holy men we might mention, shew that true religion, even in its highest pitch, is very consistent with a free, ingenuous, and graceful deportment to men, of whatever character or principle, when providence casts them in our way; nay it is a branch of religion itself, when we study such a behaviour in obedience to the authority of God and Saviour who enjoins it. And as there can be no pretence from religion, for assuming a haughty and forbidding air to any man, much less to those, whom we have reason to believe, are fellow-heirs with us

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of the same kingdom, notwithstanding some imperfections we may think attend them. We are commanded to be kindly affectioned to them in brotherly love *, Rom. xii. 10. And to have compassion upon them, to love them as brethren, to be pitiful and courteous to them, 1 Pet. iii. 8. The temper and behaviour implied in these and such like commands, are quite the reverse of such, who practically say to any fellow Christian, Stand you by, for I am holier than you (I mean, without authority from Christ for such a piece of conduct). This temper and behaviour, as I have hinted just now, has been often the unhappy mean of creating an unhallowed estrangement among Christians from one another, and of frightening many, who have no experimental knowledge of religion, at the very name. It is contrary to our nature to be treated with insolence and rudeness, without resentment, and it requires an uncommon measure of divine grace to bear it with patience and therefore it is no wonder, that a proud, saucy, overbearing behaviour, has often been the cause, and still is, of breaking Christian communion. Besides

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* In the first verse referred to, the Apostle uses two words to express the strength of that love, that Christians ought to have (and actually are possessed of, in proportion to the strength and exercise of grace in the soul) to one another. The one translated, *kindly affectioned*, properly signifies, *parental affection*, or that kind of love which parents have for their children; and therefore rendered sometimes in the New Testament, *natural affection*; and those who are without it, are ranked among the greatest of sinners, Rom. i. 31. 2 Tim. iii. 3. The other word the Apostle uses, is *brotherly love*; or that kind of affection implanted in all genuine Christians to one another, by regenerating grace. These two being joined together, certainly imply the highest degree of affection, that one creature is capable of to another. The meaning of it, I apprehend, is express in plainer terms in that command formerly mentioned *Love one another with a pure heart fervently*, 1 Pet. i. 22. And where such love reigns in the heart, a morose disdainful behaviour, will never be seen to any who appears to be a serious Christian.

when this appears to be the habitual turn of mind of any, if it be not to some particular persons, it gives too just reason to question the truth and sincerity of their religion, being a temper quite opposite to the spirit and laws of the gospel.

Lastly, Endeavour to maintain abiding impressions upon your mind, of the importance of that temper and behaviour, included in Christian fellowship or communion. You may observe in our text, as has been hinted before ; it is mentioned as an evidence whether we be in a state of holiness or not, and of our interest in the merits of the propitiatory death of the great Redeemer. ' If we walk in the light as ' he is in the light, we have fellowship or communi- ' on one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ ' his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. It is admitted by all denominations of Christians, that without love to God, there can be no religion ; an outward profes- sion without this, is that which constitutes hypocrisy, and the spirit of inspiration assures us, if we be destitute of love to our Christian brethren, we are also destitute of love to God. Nay, he intimates, that it is a thing impossible, for a man to love God, and not love his Christian brother. ' If a man say, I ' love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. ' For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath ' seen, how can he love God whom he hath not ' seen ? ' 1 John iv. 20. It is mentioned as the dis- tinguishing evidence, whether we be in a state of spiritual life or death. ' We know that we have ' passed from death unto life, because we love the ' brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth ' in death,' 1 John iii. 14. And the Apostle Paul speaks of it, as the only mark of a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus, or real conversion to holiness. and for which he thanked God, in behalf of the Chris- tians at Coloss. ' They loved all the saints, Col. i. 4. And one of the fruits of faith is love, as we are told

in scripture, viz. to God and man, especially all good men. In a word, all miraculous gifts and every other endowment are vain, or of no saving benefit to us, though we were possessed of them, without love to the children of God, as well as to himself; as the Apostle shows at large, in the xiii. chap. of his first epistle to the Corinthians: The sense of which, I shall give, as paraphrased by that pious divine, and polite scholar, the late Dr. WATTS, and with which I shall conclude this discourse.

Had I the tongues of Greeks and Jews,
And nobler speech than angels use :
If love be absent, I am found
Like tinkling brass, an empty sound.

Were I inspir'd to preach and tell
All that is done in heav'n and hell ;
Or could my faith the world remove,
Still I am nothing without love.

Should I distribute all my store
To feed the bowels of the poor ;
Or give my body to the flame,
To gain a martyr's glorious name.

If love to God, and love to men
Be absent, all my hopes are vain :
Nor tongues, nor gifts, nor fiery zeal,
The work of love can e'er fulfil.

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